

Testimony before the Public Health Committee
March 19, 2015
By Patrick Gaynor, President,
AFSCME Council 15, Connecticut Council of Police Unions

Regarding SB 454 AAC PAYMENT OF THE COSTS OF CERTIFICATION FOR A POLICE OFFICER.

I am writing in opposition to the bill requiring municipalities who hire police officers within two years of certification to reimburse the costs of certification to the agency that initially hired the officer. This bill places significant limitations on the professional mobility of Connecticut police officers, as it is highly unlikely they would be hired elsewhere when the payment of this bounty looms over their heads. Candidates who become police officers must pass stringent pre-employment testing, including a comprehensive background check, polygraph examination, psychological examination and ongoing physical fitness testing. Most new officers are excited about their jobs and loyal to their departments, however, they are acutely aware of the pay, benefits and retirement plans that are available in other departments. They are also aware of the working conditions and perks--such as those offered by the Connecticut State Police--which many towns do not offer. I note that there is no requirement to reimburse towns when officers are later hired by the Connecticut State Police yet this happens quite frequently.

Most officers leave their hiring agency because of economic factors--wages, benefits and pension. In my own police department, officers have left for this reason, most often moving to other departments that have better wages or pensions. Those who support this bill and want to keep officers from transferring to other agencies are not doing their best to improve wages and benefits that would stop officers from wanting to leave. Police officers have families and must do their best to provide for their families and their future. I would strongly suggest that those towns who are losing newer officers take a hard look at their wages, benefits and pension package and consider making changes that would allow them to retain officers instead of trying to legislate requirements that effectively makes new officers indentured servants for two years.

No other profession in this state has limitations on transferring their professional certification or license and no other profession requires a two-year payback period. Connecticut cities and towns pay the same amount for basic police officer training at the Police Officer Standards and Training Academy and the certification earned at the academy should be instantly transferrable. Teachers, firefighters, plumbers and IT workers must all obtain professional certifications and are free to look for better pay and benefits at any time after they are certified. I would ask that you oppose this bill and give Connecticut police officers the same rights and opportunities that other skilled workers have--the freedom to transfer to another city or town that provides better wages or benefits so they can support themselves and their families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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